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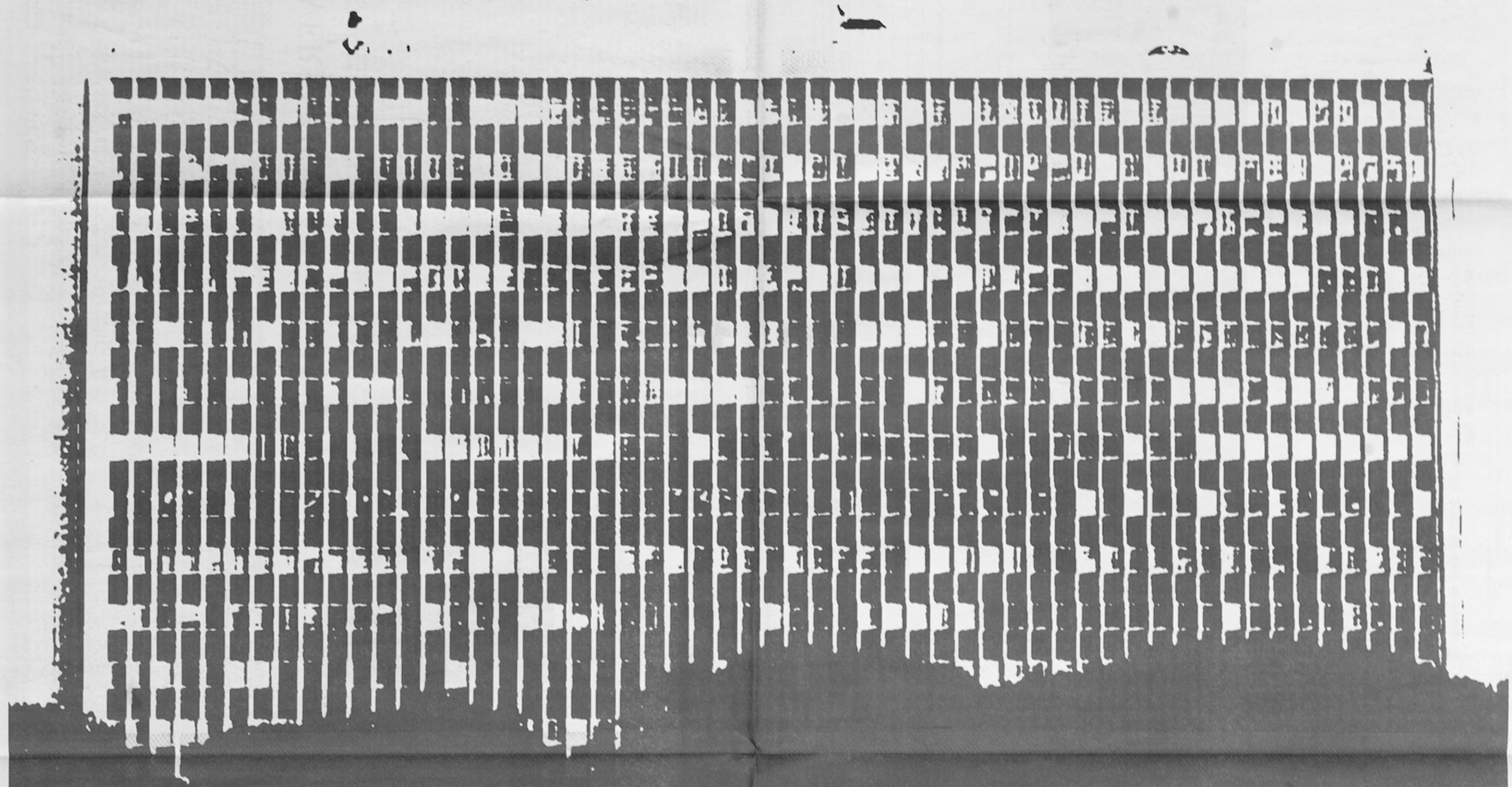

FEDERAL

The 24 HOUR MOVIE by MARY ELLEN CARROLL

Thursday, July 28, 2005, 9 am until Friday, July 29, 2005, 9 am

Exclusive engagement

Cinema Village

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Exhibition of photographs on view from June 29–August 6, 2005

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MARY ELLEN CARROLL

FEDERAL

JUNE 29—AUGUST 6, 2005

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29
6:00 until 8:00 pm

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9:00 am until 9:00 am

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A CONVERSATION ABOUT boredom.

The following is a recent electronic conversation between Jonathan Flatley and Mary Ellen Carroll that took place June 2005.

Jonathan Flatley The first issue I would propose for our conversation is something like the following:One of the things that most interests me about *Federal*, the movie, is the relationship —or perhaps non-relationship or disjuncture—it sets up between the perceptual experience of the work and the work's 'topic' or 'subject.' What do you take that perceptual experience to be? Or, what do you hope it will be? What kind of perceptual experience are you soliciting? On the one hand, the work is about filming something precisely because it is prohibited to film it, or precisely because it is bureaucratically difficult to film it. Governmentality is woven into the production process itself. We have this building, which really does typify a certain kind of late modernist governmental architecture, and so the viewer or audience can consider or think about the fact that this building has now become on some level prohibited as an object of representation. One thinks of past prohibitions, past censorships (from graven images to male genitals), and then one wonders what kind of visual information might be there that would need to be prohibited. One thinks about the making of the film itself and all that was required to do so. This is 'conceptual' and reminds one, say, of Hans Haacke's anti-institutional strategy. One also thinks about the unrepresentability of 'empire' or governmentality or whatever form of sovereignty to which we are all subject these days. However, what relation do all of these things have to the experience of watching the film itself, an experience, which is, if not exactly impossible, at least extremely difficult and unlikely? Nonetheless, as I take it, we are not to simply consider the making of the film as a phenomenon (as some people said about Warhol's films—you didn't have to see them to get the point). How would or how will people watch it? My own feeling about these durational perceptual experiences is that they tend to be something like Rorschach tests. Things bubble up from the unconscious, as we get bored, and unexpected ideas and emotions appear. We all get the Federal Building we deserve. I can say more about that, about boredom, which also seems essential here. I will say only one thing now about that, and that is: the one point that it seems essential to make is that we misrecognize boredom. Boredom is not anxiety or depression. It is a form of relaxation and readiness to be interested.

Mary Ellen Carroll Let's begin where you end—the use of duration in relation to boredom, and the act of watching. Watching a movie, watching tv, watching your neighbor, watching them move across the room. Perception— that is tricky, because what I want is never a fixed point, as the work is not made for myself or for a determined audience, but I want the general translation to be understood. The work is determined by a consistent conceptual problem and it returns to letting the 'thing' be itself. The 'thing' in this case is the work of art and the only manner in which a work of art can be successful is in the way that it makes the viewer aware of their own being or 'thingness' in the world.

The obvious reference to Warhol is also the universal opinion and understanding that people have that they know what they will see or experience without seeing it. People feel that they will be bored and that they know what something is like over 24 hours, but that is the mirroring or imitation that I am after. This also goes back to my use of the literal as a methodology. I am against metaphor. Literally stealing (we know who I am referring to when I use the word 'steal') from Warhol is also a means for distance and creating affect. In terms of experimental films though, I would align myself more with Michael Snow and philosophically it would be Nietzsche and early Heidegger.

The resistance affords the space, intellectually and emotionally to engage, and boredom as semi-conscious state, is an active state. One is conscious of themselves when they are bored and this is in relation to what is being looked at. I am not using boredom in the pejorative as I wanted to create a point between watching and looking. When you watch something you are engaged, conscious of what you are seeing or might see. When you look there is disinterestedness, or a semi-conscious state. Looking affords the possibility of boredom and duration allows for there to be a movement back and forth between the act of looking or the act of watching. Perception fantasy #2 : I want to digress completely and one thing that I always return to is a moment in Pasolini's *Teorema* when Terence Stamp is sitting outside and reading Rimbaud and Pasolini holds the shot that is aimed at the book resting upon his crotch where his legs are spread wide apart for a fraction of a second too long. You become aware that you are watching him, not looking at him. I have discussed this temporal device quite a bit with my friend, Tod Lippy. Perception reality #1: The other part of this that is so important is the necessity of a theatre for the screenings. You look at video or film in a gallery or on a monitor, you watch it in a theatre. The structure determines the act. The movie is screened in two theatres at the same time—the north facade is screened in one theatre and the south facade is screened in the other. You have to make a choice, as you cannot see the entire thing in one screening as the screening is only 24 hours long—as long as a day.

It is always screened at the same time it was made, so for instance at 5 pm in the theatre it is 5 pm outside. It also suspends the intended use of the space of the theatre and that is another part of my program, turning things upside down or rupturing their use value. I am also working on lateness as a concept and the temporal as a possible form for institutional critique. One of the things that I have thought about and this is in terms of perception and for my fantasy audience as well as the reality of what was experienced at the world premiere in Vienna, and earlier this year at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. There were six people that were the ultra-marathoners who stayed for the entire time at Top Kino in Vienna. I loved that, as I wasn't expecting one person to stay for the whole time and there were six. They said that it was akin to two things, being a drug addict and a car crash. In both experiences you keep going back to have more or to see more. But, the big caveat is that you can never see the entire thing. There is always choice involved and that is something else that is a constant in my work, in terms of a level of complexity. Others simply wanted to see a particular moment repeated, so they came at the beginning and the end of the screening to see what stayed the same from one day to the next.

The disjuncture you begin with is something that I also engage with as a process, but even in titling the piece *Federal* and the literalization of that, there is a certain irony in the obvious politicization that is implied. It should move far beyond that, at least that is the hope in terms of perception. It should disappear.

JF You say that "Perception—is tricky, because what I want is never a fixed point, as the work is not made for myself or for a determined audience, but I want the general translation to be understood." I see what you mean, I think (although 'general translation' I'm not so sure about) you do not have a particular audience experience, or even a particular audience, in mind. The work is not intentional in that way. Yet, you do have a pretty specific idea about what a 'work of art' does when it is doing something: making "the viewer aware of their own being or 'thingness' in the world." Here is where I want to get dialectical. Allow me a brief digression to explain by analogy: commenting on Kant's understanding of art as necessarily 'disinterested,' Adorno writes that this disinterest must be "shadowed by the wildest interest." In fact, he suggests, "the dignity of artworks depends on the intensity of the interest from which they are wrested."[1] Is there something similar at work in the understanding (theory, even) of how art works and what it is, which you bring to your practice? Is there not a presumed theory of how the world works and what experience there is, in your defense of the function of the work of art? If we need the work of art to make us aware of our 'thingness' is this something special to the work of art, or are there other things that do this? Does that mean we are insufficiently (or differently) aware of our being or 'thingness' in everyday life? ('Thingness' itself, of course, would have to be seen as a thoroughly historical concept, as it is tied up with the history of the commodity, capital—the reification of our labor, universal fungibility especially—not to mention slavery, where people were meant to feel their 'thingness' quite frequently and unpleasantly.)

In an essay I wrote on Donald Judd and Andy Warhol, I made the case that they were each interested in promoting a kind of boredom which would clear the space for new kinds of interest to emerge, not because the viewer needs to be wrested from the "wildest interest," but because the late capitalist subject is continually assaulted by intensely emotionally demanding stimuli—from crowds to the nightly news to work on the assembly line or answering phones or providing 'customer service' of some kind or another—so that s/he must in effect emotionally withdraw or shield themselves off from the world. ("It's too hard to care," Warhol remarked.) In relation to this, Judd and Warhol sought to clear the space for the boredom that Walter Benjamin called "an apogee of mental relaxation . . . the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience."[2] And here I see similarities with *Federal*.

The question that emerges here—not so much a question 'for you,' more nearly the question that I find myself posing to myself in relation to *Federal* – concerns the historicity of the work. What has changed, for example, since the early 1960s when Judd's and Warhol's work emerged? The obvious 'big' answer is: the end of the Cold War, globalization, the emergence of some new form of sovereignty, call it 'Empire' after Hardt and Negri if we want. How does this new form of sovereignty, along with its new forms of subjectivity, the demands of 'affective labor' (as discussed by Hardt/Negri and Paolo Virno, among others) which seems to be the form of labor that increasing numbers of people engage in (teachers, telemarketers, actors, nannies, sex workers, advertisers, and so on) these days – how does all of this affect 'the work of art'? I don't think anyone really has an answer to this yet, but it's a question provocatively posed by *Federal*, even, or especially, if, as you say, "the obvious politicization that is implied . . . should disappear."

The distinction you make between watching and looking makes a lot of sense to me. Duration makes it possible—at least in some instances—for movement back and forth between a kind of relaxed meditation which would also be the space for daydreaming and imagination (looking) and a more conscious, intense examination of a visual phenomenon (watching). *Federal*, moreover, like the Pasolini moment you cite, gives one the space to reflect upon that very movement back and forth between watching and looking. An understanding of the historicity of the work would have to take this into account, I think.

Also, I agree completely that a theater is necessary for the screening. A gallery or a bar or whatever makes the above mentioned mode of relaxation and self-reflection impossible. Ideally a theater with really comfortable chairs, or better yet couches. Sitting for a long time turns out to be quite demanding physically. For that reason alone, the ultra marathoners you mention in Vienna are real heroes.

MEC I agree with what you say about the dialectic and Kant moving towards Adorno. The interest and the dignity are both there of course and that is the element that allows the viewer in, and why everything that went into the making of *Federal* shouldn't be apparent. But, I will conclude in restating that I am not a Kantian. I would align myself with Nietzsche and the difference is from a position of where cognition fits in to use Larry Wiener's words 'reading a work of art' and whether the experience is one that elicits a response of pleasurable thinking or thinking pleasurably. When we frame it from within Adorno's position of disinterest being a ghost of wild interest, I can be convinced. Yes, the historicity is implied and my choice of using the word 'thing' should be an obvious choice; perhaps using self-consciousness, which is what I really mean, expands and locates the reading for the viewer and for myself as the maker in the contemporary. In saying politicization should disappear, I want to clarify that it is always there, and I use this in the literal sense wherein to disappear doesn't mean that it isn't there, it just means that it can't be seen. The viewer should think and have their own experience of the work and my attempts at making the invisible visible is the point between looking and watching.

Endnotes

[1] Theodor Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), page 11.

[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969): pages 83-109. Page 91

Jonathan Flatley is an Associate Professor of English at Wayne State University in Detroit. Flatley has published numerous articles on art and culture with extensive writing on Andy Warhol as well as other artists including these recent publications: "The Agency of Letters" (On Sam Durant) in *Afterall*; "Allegories of Boredom," in Ann Goldstein ed., *A Minimal Future: Art as Object 1958-1968*; "Art Machine," in Nicholas Baume ed. *Sol Lewitt, Incomplete Open Cubes*; "Moscow and Melancholia," in *Social Text*. *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* is forthcoming from Harvard University Press and he is currently working on a new book: *Like: Andy Warhol and Affectivity*.

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THE PRODUCTION CREW INCLUDED MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE THANKED FOR THEIR GENEROUS TIME, HARD WORK AND SUPPORT AND IN PARTICULAR JON GUZIK, MOLLY HASSELL, PATRICK ROURK, AND WILL SHIN. THE FILMMAKERS AND MEMBERS OF THE MOCK AND SANDERS FAMILY. ALL OF THE INDIVIDUALS WHO WORK FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE REALIZATION OF THIS PROJECT, IN PARTICULAR—BETTYE PORTER. THE STAFF OF THE LA NATIONAL CEMETERY, THE GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION AND THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION, RUDY VIDAL, PANASONIC CORPORATION, OUTPOST DIGITAL, APPLE COMPUTERS, TEKSERVE, HUBERT WINTER, GALERIE HUBERT WINTER, MELANIE WAGNER, WALTER AND MARIA HOLZER, DAVID JEFFRIES, ANTHONY ELMS, JACQUELINE TERRASSA, HAMZA WALKER, SUZANNE GHEZ, THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY, LAURIE SCHWARTZ, TOP KINO, THE WEGENSTEIN FAMILY, ANNE MARIE AND THOMAS LUDWIG, MYUNG IL SABA SONG, MARWAN SABA, TOD LIPPY, DAVID HARITON, CINEMA VILLAGE, ED ARENTZ, PATRICIA CARROLL, SARAH HERDA AND THE REST OF THE STAFF OF STOREFRONT.

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MARY ELLEN CARROLL

FEDERAL

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THE MAKING OF FEDERAL

THE FOLLOWING IS THE UNEDITED TRANSCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE SHOT FOR, *THE MAKING OF FEDERAL* BY THE AWARD WINNING DOCUMENTARIANS—FREIDA LEE MOCK AND JESSICA SANDERS.

July 28, 2003 7:15 am

Freida Lee Mock What is happening today?

Mary Ellen Carroll We are going to the Federal Building at 11000 Wilshire Boulevard in West Los Angeles and starting the 24 hour shoot of *Federal*, the simultaneous dual projection movie of the front and the back of the Federal Building. It will be a significant, but minor nod (that was my equivocated Laura Riding comment for the record) to many people, including Michael Snow, Andy Warhol, Pam Lee, Gertrude Stein, Walter Benjamin, Charles Renfro, Peter Eisemann, Lydia Davis, Terry De Duve, Allan Sekula, Adorno, Sontag, Terry Riley (the composer and the head of the architecture department at MOMA) two people with the same name inhabiting separate bodies, Toni Negri, Charles Luckman the architect and SOM etc. We can get to the real point which is like a Lacanian short session—the actual point being, the questions of being and structure and representation and their relationship to identification. We are at a point post-World Trade Towers where every structure in the public (including ourselves) is a political symbol. The political has always been there, but no one was paying attention to it. What that means quite simply is what it is not, and that not being a typological investigation like the Becher's project and their progeny. There is a very pragmatic explanation for all of this in that the intention of the photograph or photographer and representation of a number of things is no longer possible. Hence, these things, structures or beings are like ghosts.

FLM Who are you here with?

MEC This is Michael Isabell, the director of photography and the rest of the crew is outside. We had to keep it very skeletal due to all of the security clearances and so that we in effect are not seen as a large protest group, even though this was one part of the permit process we needed to employ, an application for demonstration. We will have two crews, one will be in shooting the front of the building or 'the face' on the north side of Wilshire from inside the LA National Cemetery, a 115 acre park—and the other crew will be back by the garbage cans and those gigantic cement planters that everyone installed as camouflaged blockades at the outside edge of the parking lot of the Federal Building on the south side. The south side is the main entrance to the building and it is where everything takes place. The cemetery is the bucolic side. The cameras will be synced and we will be shooting the front and the back of the building for 24 hours, or as some would say a day.

FLM How long did it take to organize the shoot, the permissions, where did the idea come from, how did you get under the 9.11 restrictions, to get the Federal government to say yes to allow you to do this?

MEC Well, first of all, I don't know that I got under it, I think that there is no getting under it or around it, and it is naïve to think that. I have been photographing the building for over the past fifteen years and when I was here over a year ago and went to photograph it, I was stopped by an FBI agent who asked me what I was doing and I said that I was a photographer from New York and that I have photographed this building for the past fifteen years. He then looked at me with the most impressive unexpressive response.

FLM When did you become a straight photographer and what happened next?

MEC I didn't, but to say conceptual photographer and filmmaker which is the most accurate description of my work, sounds so pretentious. When you respond and just say you are an artist they then want to know what kind of work you do and then you inevitably get asked if you are a painter, but anyway that is a digression, let's just say it is easier to say. I was doing a lot of work on institutions and post-Vietnam, these institutions as allegorical structures of power, but singular structures that are isolated and not repeated as I mentioned earlier. I grew up south of Los Angeles and went back to LA after graduate school and three and a half years in Asia and as I mentioned was photographing particular structures and places over time, and this also included making films as I studied with Brakhage and this other filmmaker/philosopher Robert Rayher. The other thing about the Federal Building is that it could be mistaken as a skyscraper in Los Angeles and there is nothing else around that competes with its height or breadth. It is a mass that in effect disappears, and that is the key to all of my work, making the invisible visible. Most people don't know the building until you describe what is surrounding it, the 405 Freeway, the LA National Cemetery, Wilshire, UCLA, etc. Oh, look there's the reader. (There is a homeless man who sits in a chair under a viaduct with a pile of books. He was reading a Dean Koontz novel.) Who would give a homeless person Dean Koontz, that is the equivalent of an Emeril cookbook.

FLM I have seen him for over ten years. He used to be around Santa Monica Boulevard.

MEC Back to permissions. I was initially there as I said to photograph it and I had made the decision to make the movie and knew that I would need permission so when I was stopped and asked what I was doing, I said that I was photographing it in order to get permission from them—them being the FBI. The FBI agent said to me that I would never get permission to do that. Immediately, I was slightly disheartened, but I knew that it wasn't an absolute. They said, no, but I decided to go through the entire process and see what happened. There is a moment when you pause and this sounds very naïve, but that you ask yourself about your status and due process within a democracy and as a national and what is the relationship between the national and the federal as an individual. I always say that the paradox of being an American is the individual always confronting their desire to be a part of a collective consciousness. This is why religion is getting in the way again, another institution that could be construed as being a part of the federal. The other thing is that architecture is usurping the position of art in the public and quite successfully at that. I proceeded to go to the main office for the LA National Cemetery and met with the director, this man Bill Livingston who was in his office with a veteran and planning the Memorial Day celebration. I was seated out in the waiting area and when he finally came out and asked me what I needed to see him about and I explained my idea for the movie and that we would need to have a crew inside of the cemetery and he said that it would be impossible to get permission to film the Federal Building. I then asked and said that I understood that he could not give me the permission to shoot, but what about the permission to have a crew on the cemetery. He said then that I would never get the permission and that therefore he wouldn't be able to give me permission to be on the premises. So, I said, well, if I get permission from the FED's can I come back to you and get permission for the crew to shoot from this side of Wilshire for 24 hours. He said yeah, sure, but it will never, ever happen.

From there, I drive over to the Federal Building and stopped at the security desk and asked who I needed to see to talk about permissions for filming and they said that I needed to see Bettye Porter, who is the head of the General Services Administration. They send me through the metal detector and put my bag through the x-ray machine and I go up to see Bettye Porter at GSA and she is not there and they tell me that I can wait, but it will be a while. I wait over an hour and finally this woman walks in, smartly dressed in purple with a big piece of jewelry and asks me what I want and she says that I will have to complete all of the paper work and then she goes to get the forms that I need to fill out. Well the forms are actually permits for permission to demonstrate. I then told her that we are going to be making a movie and the watching may be considered protesting but, we will need to be on the property and at the LA National Cemetery to make a movie about the building and that we will be shooting for 24 hours. She then raises an eyebrow and tells me that you know that the FBI occupies the top four floors of the building in addition to the CIA and the Secret Service and I said that I knew that. She hands me the paper work and her card and I asked if it was she who I ultimately would be corresponding with, and she said that eventually, yes.

FLM What happened next?

MEC I returned to New York and thought about the entire thing for a while and tried to problematize it to see for myself what the work would actually be and how much process is too much, but I could see the layers and complexity to the entire piece structurally and this intrigues me in the same manner that the building can function like an impersonation. I was thinking about Margaret Cho impersonating her mother if you really want to know, when I thought about Luckman and the Federal Building next to Bunshaft's Lever House. Lever House was commissioned by Luckman when he was the CEO of Lever Brothers. I use impersonating in the same manner of recognition or resemblance to the list of individuals that I mentioned at the beginning of this interview. Ultimately what I decided about the entire thing was that it was political, in the same manner that putting up a building in an urban metropolis would be political. What I needed was to utilize the politicians and the political process as a layer in the work because it was the platform from which I would secure permission and public support. The only difference is that architecture is fundamentally utilitarian whereas art is not, so convincing them of the necessity of this wherein duration creates dimension was what I realized I needed to do.

FLM You are making political art.

MEC Is that a question? Well, I wouldn't say that, but I always say that all work is political. Most 'political' art is very successful at failing. Fundamentally, all art is defined and resides in the social and within the social is the political, so even if you are making little drawings in the quiet of your own home, well there is a 'politic' to that, even if you are not conscious of that. The trick is to make it disappear in a sense. I err on the side of subtlety and this is when I can add 'marxist' without further explanation or an apology—seriously, as a social moniker. I then proceeded to write, and I wrote and wrote, everyone from Senator Clinton and Senator Schumer from my state New York, to your Senator Boxer and Senator Feinstein in California, the former Governor of California, the Mayor of Los Angeles, the press—newspapers, cable and television, radio and magazines, and finally the agencies of the Federal Government, the FBI, the CIA, the Secret Service, and the NEA. What I wrote was that we live in a time when the production and representation of images has shifted to where an image is seen as something that is used for an ulterior purpose. Things can no longer be themselves. Where is the literal as a form of genuine irony? I am against metaphor.

The letter I received back from the NEA was priceless. It wasn't a form letter exactly, but it resembled one and basically stated that the NEA no longer funds artist projects and the irony being that I wasn't looking for funding, just a letter of support as a filmmaker in the conceptual premise to the work. That letter came from Dana Gioa, a poet who was the head of the NEA when I was securing permissions. This is not the moment for an ad hominem or well reasoned argument about support for the arts, but when everything is expected to be funded in the private sector, there is no reason for the public to respect or even forget about respect, but attempt to understand culture and participate in the creation of cultural capital, none whatsoever. We seem to be digressing.

FLM You actually addressed specific individuals within the agencies and what or how long was the response?

MEC Yes, as I felt it needed to be individualized and a directed correspondence in order for there to be any attention paid by anyone. In fact, one night I was working late in my studio and I received a call from someone asking for Bettye Porter at the GSA and I said that it was not Bettye Porter, but Mary Ellen Carroll and if I could be of help to them. It ended up being someone from the FBI and I said that I was happy to hear from them as they were on my list of people to speak with and I explained the project and that I was trying to secure the permission and what was it that I needed to do to complete this. She said that she would let me know and in the next two weeks I heard from two more FBI agents, one who said that it was going to be impossible and the next who called and said that it was a go and that I needed to be in contact with Bettye Porter and she would handle the contact and security for the agency. At that point, they knew everything and as a friend who works for all sides in the industry of the surreptitious said, MEC you are very hot, meaning that I had relinquished any sense of being a private citizen at that point and it was just a matter of time to see what would be the next step. I then received two more calls from the FBI. One from a man in their San Francisco office who I explained the project to and who said that it was impossible and then another from inside the Los Angeles office who just asked me again for my social security number and said that if the main office was supportive it would happen. The entire thing took a great deal of patience and persistence and it was something that I honestly had no expectation of being able to realize.

FLM You didn't tell them you were taking flying lessons.

MEC Very funny. It was simply the fact that I was diligent. You have to look at the shift in perception and how buildings, spaces, individuals are now targets, and this is a valid concern, but things can go beyond what that perception is, and a larger question of what that 'thing' was before it was a target, when there was a use value and what the additional levels are. I would rather take something that exists and turn it into nothing, so that the viewer or public becomes aware of themselves. Where the building or form becomes just that. The insistence of the image of that building over 24 hours makes it disappear in a sense and goes back to subjectivity and meaning—self-consciousness. When is the understanding or meaning acquired and how is that incorporated into one's concrete reality versus the symbolic, that is a generator of fear. Fear is an individualized emotion and some of the most poignant writing about this is from Augustine in the 4th century b.c.e.

FLM Where are we now?

MEC We are at the entrance to the Federal Building and we are going to security to pick up the paper work we need that contains the permits to be on the property and in the cemetery.

FLM I am seeing this building in a new light, when what I normally associate it with was demonstrations.

MEC Or getting a passport.

July 28, 2003, 8:00 am—At this point the necessary paperwork needs to be picked up and MEC goes inside of the Federal Building and returns back to the parking lot on the south side.

FLM What happened?

MEC Well, I went in and they couldn't find the paper work and then they realized that the permissions were for tomorrow and I explained that this was impossible as the date was for today. They weren't willing to listen as what was written was different from what I was telling them. We called Bettye Porter and she acknowledged that there was a mistake, only after I showed our correspondence. There was a moment that was a bit stressful, but there was nothing that I could do until she said it was okay so that we can make our 9 am start time. They were only doing their job. It is all taken care of so we need to get set up right away.

FLM Is this an approved site?

MEC Yes. We came yesterday with this radar distance measuring device to frame the shots from the same point on both sides and the Secret Service came out and stopped us. It was very SWAT–like. It was only Michael, the director of photography and myself and it was a Sunday, so no one was in the parking lot. We were absorbed in this discussion about how to frame the shot and then all of a sudden out of nowhere these two cars and two men were surrounding us and they pulled guns on us and asked for id's. I pulled out the paper work and my driver's license. One was dressed in what looked like a Banana Republic khaki suit with a cerulean blue shirt, no tie—took the license and handed it back to me and said, so you are a Chelsea girl. I said that I lived in Chelsea and then asked if he lived in Manhattan and then he said, no, Fort Lee, New Jersey. I said that there was this great Japanese grocery store, Yaohan, and had he been and he said no. The other guy just stood there in a very Matrix like get up. Black leather pants, a tight black t-shirt, and those wrap around sunglasses and didn't say a word.

Suddenly a large SUV pulls up and four men get out near the production site where the crew is being given instructions for the shoot.

MEC Do you see that car that just came and parked? Those guys are all Secret Service. I want to point out to all of you that the key document is in this folder and if anyone stops and asks just offer to show them the permit and your id. It is important that we never have to stop shooting. We are recording the ambient sound, so if you can engage with them off camera and have a conversation that narrates what is happening, well then that will be all the better.

FLM Are the settings the same on the cameras?

Michael Isabell Yes, everything has been synced between the two cameras. We will manually adjust the aperture, to the lighting conditions. The changing of the tapes was a technical decision and temporal one in order to mark the hour by the process rather than the actual time. We also made a conscious decision not to record all of the material to a hard drive, but to keep it on separate tapes. Eventually it will be one contiguous sequence.

FLM Are these special cameras?

Michael Isabell They are a new high definition camera that Panasonic just came out with and they were generous and provided us with them for the shoot. It all worked and now we are heading over to the LA National Cemetery to set up over there and to begin the shoot.

FLM How did you resolve the security issue?

MEC Everything leads back to Bettye Porter. She took care of it, as the GSA is ultimately the managerial arm of the Federal government's facilities. They take care of the day to day running of the physical plants, buildings, etc. She runs the Federal Building, but the FBI have the say or power over her and they will show up throughout the shoot in addition to the other security agencies. Now we are arriving at the bucolic side, the quiet side, due to the fact that everyone is dead. We will meet with the deputy director of the cemetery and Michael will set up over there.

FLM It is beautiful.

MEC Yes, it is, but I will be going back and forth. I need to be on the other side where all of the activity is taking place because it should diffuse any of the problems that they may encounter. My name is on everything for the security clearance and this side is the public face of the building. Everyone knows this side, although the back is truly where everything takes place.

Sounds of helicopters, lawn movers and traffic are heard as FLM and MEC pull up to the site. They walk inside of the administration building for the cemetery and are shown into the Bob Hope Chapel—a separate building that will be kept open all night in order to have access to a restroom and electricity. Bob Hope died that day at the age of 100.

FLM It is appropriate that you are here today in the Bob Hope Chapel.

MEC I heard that he died today on NPR. I woke up in a panic last night as I thought about the sprinkler system and forgot to mention that to the foreman. How do we take care of that?

Cemetery Administrator The supervisor was going to shut off that section of the cemetery.

MEC Does he have a cell phone just in case? What time do they usually go off so we can anticipate it if there is a problem.

Cemetery Administrator He will come out to see you when you are setting up. If it does though, you can call him and wake him up at any time.

They proceed to go to the site in the south end of the cemetery, directly across from the Federal Building and set up in between two rows of markers.

FLM Look at all of this land, ready for burials.

MEC No, actually the cemetery is full. It is 115 acres in the middle of west LA. You know that the VA will sell it at some point or create some kind of system that will allow for building above it. The land is far too valuable to just leave it, although it should be left as it is a release valve for the city.

FLM Michael, the director of photography, will be able to park overnight and then where will they go to the bathroom, etc.?

MEC Bob Hope Chapel will be the place for charging and discharging.

FLM And the other side?

MEC Inside the lobby is a set of public rest rooms, but it may be easier for them to drive off the premises. We will see, but the arrangements were made. Now we will get Michael set up to start.

FLM It is beautiful. Here comes someone.

MEC That is the foreman of the cemetery.

Supervisor Hail Mary.

MEC Hi. It was mentioned that you made the arrangements for the sprinkler system.

FLM How many acres is it?

Supervisor 115. This is the grounds keeper.

MEC Hello.

Grounds keeper So how long are you going to be here for?

MEC 24 hours.

Grounds keeper 24 hours, really? You will be here all night. The water is off, just so you know.

MEC I heard rumor of that so thank you. This is the relaxed side, it is stress free over here.

Grounds keeper Yeah, sure, we like it that way. We don't want any stress around the dead people. It used to be that I did all of that manually, but now there is a computer to handle the sprinklers.

MEC Either way, it is good to know that it will be off.

Supervisor Will you be here Tuesday night as well?

MEC No, we will stop shooting at 9 am tomorrow morning.

Grounds keeper So, you are going to hang out here overnight and film.

MEC Yes. I will be going back and forth, but Michael Isabell will be here with the rest of the crew. We will start at 9 and continue until 9 the next day.

Grounds keeper What is this all about?

MEC I am an artist from New York and I am here to make a 24 hour movie about the Federal Building.

Grounds keeper Wow, really, they are letting you do that, really? Whoooaa.

FLM I know, isn't that amazing, can you believe that?

Grounds keeper I can't believe that they are letting you do that. I mean...after all that we have gone through here.

Supervisor It is amazing isn't it. After a while you will notice when you are here that you will see all of the airplanes flying over the building from the Santa Monica Airport as they never changed the flight pattern after 9.11.

MEC Really, they haven't changed that? You see the planes circle around Manhattan and I am surprised that this is the case here.

Grounds keeper Amazing that they are letting them do that, how can that be? I mean after what happened and now you have to get a permit to take a snapshot, but to film for 24 hours, and with the protestors, and the government and because the Federal Building is so close, and the whole thing. Film it! Hey, that's why I love the government, that's why I work for them, I love them. Hey, you just never know.

Supervisor When will the water come on, Tuesday night?

Grounds keeper It will come on at 4 o'clock.

MEC We will be fine.

Supervisor: I just wanted to make sure.

MEC Will you be here?

Supervisor Yes, I will be here all day. The only thing that might happen is if someone comes by to make a visit to the grave marker and say if it happens to be right here you may have to shut down and move.

MEC Okay.

Grounds keeper For respect.

Supervisor There's that possibility.

Grounds keeper Well you know—you know that it's gonna happen. You know that it is one in a million and someone is gonna come here and go why, why, why....

Supervisor That is a possibility, you know. But, you were aware of that way ahead of time. I have only been here a year, but the director can tell you that if there was someone here and filming before 9.11 they would shut down for 15 or 30 minutes and let the family pay their respects.

MEC Michael, are you hearing that.

FLM Just stay off the gravestone.

Supervisor It could be really far and between, but someone could come by and say how come my marker has not been cleaned and I want to pay my respects. They might let you leave your stuff running and then you just need to walk away and give them some space and so that they can have peace and quiet. They will approach us first I am sure. The police will come by and ask for paperwork or a permit and everyone knows here that you have a permit, so you should be fine.

Grounds keeper So, they are gonna lock you in at 5 o'clock huh?

Supervisor Yes, that is the arrangement.

Grounds keeper Watch out for the ghosts. My old irrigation system that I ran before they put this computer in, well we didn't have a computer system, but there was a big control box and so when we were testing it and they said, well why don't you work a couple of nights and see what works and what doesn't work. And I go, do I have to and they say well you have to see how this works and that works and so I spent two nights here and the only thing I saw were the coyotes. So if you see some really bright eyes you know what they are.

Supervisor Now there will be a burial over here where this dumpster is, I mean this dump truck. It will be a cremation burial.

FLM When you say cremation burial, what do you mean? Is that when they just put the ashes in the ground.

Supervisor Yes.

FLM Do you have quite a few services a day?

Supervisor No, we have been closed since 1978, for active burials. We just have spouses now.

Grounds keeper Can't get away from you little women. Even when we are gone you get right back on top of us and slam us again. When I tell people I work here and they say oh, you work at the Veteran's Cemetery, and I tell them that I am the guy who keeps it green and they are so excited and I then say, it is just a park. After years it just becomes a park. People ask how they bury here and I let them know that we are closed and everyone goes out to Riverside. They then ask what happens with the spouses and I explain that they get put on top of their men. Then they ask if they are stood up vertically.

Supervisor I hear they do that in Louisiana. They bury them standing up to save space.

MEC I am starting to shoot the stills and we are ready to start rolling at 9 am.

FLM What kind of camera is that?

MEC It is a medium format, two and a quarter. It is normally used for portraiture and this is what I consider the stills of the building to be. If I was shooting it conceptually as straight architecture I would use a large format camera, a 4"x5" or an 8"x 10". An image will be taken every hour on the hour. Inverting the Becher's.

Supervisor: If you need bathrooms, there are bathrooms near that flagpole and just don't sit anything on the markers. For charging the batteries you can go to the Bob Hope Chapel.

Michael We were shown where everything is.

Supervisor: He will do the first watch after the lock down at 5.

Walkie Talkie We are set, it is 10 seconds until 9. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. Action.

Michael Action. Rolling.

MEC We have all of the tapes marked and in order, extra batteries,

FLM Michael, is this one of your cushier jobs.

Michael Yes, but no. I am looking forward to coyote action, but I have never looked at something for 24 hours, nor have I spent the night in a cemetery.

FLM 115 acres of quiet.

MEC You have everything that you need and I will go back to the other side to check in on them. The camera is loaded with color, 160.

July 28, 2003, 5 pm

JESSICA SANDERS How long have you been here?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT I have now been here for 8 hours and I will work for two more hours. It has been relatively quiet and there haven't been too many interruptions by the Bureau people.

MEC It is the witching hour. A bit of anxiety at the beginning due to the mix up with the paper work, and we have been stopped by the various security agencies. One group came wearing monogrammed polo shirts with FBI Bomb Squad over the left breast. We were coveting those. We should check eBay, to see if some ex-FBI agent is selling his wardrobe online, like the drag queens I know who buy Hooters outfits for Halloween. It will show up some place. They have all been helpful on this side and everyone at the cemetery has been helpful as well. The trouble is from a lack of information. Everyone is a part of the process. Panasonic called to check on the camera and that was very generous on their part. We are sitting between two garbage dumpsters, one that has boxes that say clothing for children in Iran and the other is refuse from the tennis club. We are getting ready for the early evening shift, followed by the graveyard shift.

A bit of information about the architect. It was designed by Charles Luckman in 1970, and is described as being 'an immense file cabinet that one cannot miss and is as depressing of a comment on architecture of the 70's as it is a condemnation of the bureaucracy of our society.'

I think they miss the point. He was an interesting character in reality. He was trained as an architect, but for some reason went into business and was the youngest president of Pepsodent Toothpaste and he later became the CEO of Lever Brothers. It was during his reign that Lever House was commissioned and built by SOM. He also felt that architecture should service the client and the architect should listen to the client, and that explains a great deal right there. The type of building he produced fits within a bureaucratic typology.

JS After sitting and filming for 8 hours do you have any new thoughts about the building or the process?

PA I have actually visited this building previous to today to get a passport, so I had a few experiences. I don't know that I have any new feelings, but I do feel a bigger connection with it than I did before today.

JS How did you end up here?

PA I heard about it from another friend who I worked on an action film with. There is a bit of irony in that, although I have to say that there is a great deal going on. It is not boring at all.

JS Great.

July 28, 2003, 10 pm. 65 consecutive days of sun with no rain in southern California and the forecast for July 28th was clear and sunny. Rain and thunder started at 9:45 pm. Helicopters with search lights circled the parking lot.

JS Are they scoping you?

MEC Yes, did you see what they did? They flew over to that side, came back around and flashed the spotlight and then went back out and came around again and then headed back to the airport.

JS Is it raining, and what hour are we at?

MEC It is hour thirteen. The home stretch.

July 29, 2003, 8:30 am, LA National Cemetery

FLM Good morning.

JON GUZIK Hi, good morning. I have been here almost 24 hours.

FLM We brought you rolls and espresso. Anything unusual?

JG Just a lot of dead people.

FLM We will see you shortly. Good morning Michael. Will you be sad to leave this place?

MI It is a very interesting way to experience Los Angeles.

FLM Have you been over to the other side?

MI No. At first it was like a picnic, then it became a long day, at two or three in the morning I was talking with the grounds keepers and then a couple of cemetery pranksters passed through.

FLM Look at this beautiful place.

July 29, 2003, 8:45 am, Federal Building

FLM What is going on?

MEC We are wrapping.

Walkie Talkie 25 seconds and we can change the tape, stop it down as well for the light change.

MEC Stop. We will continue to roll for a half an hour. Michael are you at 5.6? Go darker to 6.8.

MEC Recording the final moments. Rolling.

FLM Everyone seems relatively alert for being up for so long.

MEC We went to the FBI gym.

FLM Really? Is it open 24 hours.

MEC An olympic indoor pool.

FLM Only for insiders. Did you sleep?

MEC We were wrapped in garbage bags to stay warm because of the rain. It was cold.

FLM Did everything go as you planned?

Molly Hassell Yes, it was fine. A wolf and some other very strange activities—don't ask.

MEC It went well. We have come to the moment of repetition. We have watched every employee arrive in their car, park and walk to the entrance of the building. There was an amazing scene with this woman and her white Ford Gran Torino.

MH All without saying hello. That was amazing as you can see that they all arrive at their respective flex times and park in assigned spaces and get in and out of their cars with no interaction.

MEC What about civility?

FLM Last night, how was it?

MEC We experienced every possible type of weather and lighting condition and interruption, but it was fine, relatively quiet. When you look at something for that long it changes, it stops being itself, and there is always something else that you see. It becomes very active and engaging. We were visited by quite a few people who wanted to know what we were doing. Nevada Innovative Security made numerous rounds as the sub-contractor for Homeland Security. But in truth, it is all just anecdotal material as the movie is the movie and these are just the circumstances around it that make for some good and some not so good story telling.

FLM We were over at the cemetery on the way here. Michael seemed fine and John was looking a bit fried and he was reading *People*.

MEC He has quite an appetite and is very funny. We know the cars for all the different agents. The resistance and the response has come full circle. It has been turned over.

FLM From the suspicion and hostility.

MEC One of the things that I was thinking about this morning is suspicion and why is there the expectation that people should behave any differently than what they did. The persistence/insistence of our being here shifts the perception and the relationship we have to everyone and to this place. It neutralizes the entire thing and humanizes it in a manner that I wasn't expecting. That is where you get your affect, through the temporal.

That distanciation is something that is an implied element of conceptual work and what ends up happening is that it shifts back to the social and in my opinion that is what makes it successful. This was the only way to do it. There is also human error and that is a part of it. Frieda you are in the frame of the camera, speaking of error.

FLM The simple fact that you had a crew and chose not to make it an entirely mechanized project changes things right there. What will happen next?

MEC I will immediately sell it to the networks.

MH You have to blow up the building next.

MEC Not even funny. The footage will have to be dubbed and then vetted by the FBI. There is no editing, only the combining of sequences.

FLM What do you hope the audience goes away with?

MEC Well, that is a good question. I think that most of what I do is to not determine a specific experiene for the audience.

FLM Let me rephrase it, what do you hope to accomplish?

MEC I hope that there will be some sense of what watching is in relation to a work of art. There should also be a questioning of the federal, the function of boredom, the historical references mentioned at the beginning, where or what is the political, what is architecture and the role of built forms in the public, what is duration, is there a thickness to the temporal that can be extended to the work of art? To conclude with less earnestness: that someone will be sitting in a theater in New York and think that they have relaxed to the point where they can actually watch the movie and think that nothing is happening—with the realization that they are wrong. In the words of Gertrude Stein, "something is happening all of the time."